

Message Text

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E.O. 11652: NA

TAGS: ELAB, AR

SUBJECT: ICFTU AND FIET LEADER SPEAKS OUT ON WAGE PROBLEM
IN ARGENTINA

EMBASSIES, CONSULATE AND US MISSIONS FOR LABOR OFFICERS
CARACAS AND CURACAO PLEASE PASS IRO-FIET SEC GEN ELMER FOSTER;
DEPT PLEASE PASS GERARD P. O'KEEFE, INT'L & FOREIGN AFFAIRS
DIRECTOR OF RCIA

1. A PRESS CONFERENCE CALLED BY FLORENCIA CARRANZA, SECRETARY
GENERAL OF THE GENERAL CONFEDERATION OF COMMERCIAL EMPLOYEES
OF THE ARGENTINE REPUBLIC (AND A MEMBER OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEES
OF THE ICFTU, FIET AND IRO-FIET) TO DISCUSS THE RESULTS OF THE
COMMERCAIL EMPLOYEES' 18TH NATIONAL CONGRESS IN MAR DEL PLATA
A WEEK AGO HAS BEEN GIVEN WIDE AND FAVORABLE COVERAGE IN THE
BUENOS AIRES PRESS. "LA OPINION" DESCRIBED THE EVENT AS THE
FIRST TIME SINCE THE MARCH 24 GOLPE THAT AN ARGENTINE UNION
LEADER CALLED A PRESS CONFERENCE AND PUBLICLY DISCUSSED GOVERNMENT
POLICY IN CRITICAL TERMS.

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2. ADDRESSING THE QUESTION OF WAGES AND DECLINING WORKER PURCHASING POWER, CARRANZA STATED THAT THE WORKERS HAD REACHED THE LIMITS OF THEIR ABILITY TO MAKE SACRIFICES; INASMUCH AS THE GOVERNMENT HAD REITERATED THAT AN EQUAL EFFORT SHOULD BE MADE BY ALL SOCIAL CLASSES, IT WAS TIME FOR THE ENTREPRENEURIAL SECTOR TO MAKE ITS CONTRIBUTION BY REINVESTING PROFITS IN THE LABOR FORCE. ESTIMATING THAT REAL WAGES HAD FALLEN 20 PERCENT IN THE LAST TWO MONTHS, CARRANZA SAID THAT THE GOVERNMENT'S OBLIGATION WAS TO RESTORE A "JUST WAGE" TO THE WORK FORCE "AS OF YESTERDAY."

3. CARRANZA ALSO REFERRED CRITICALLY TO THE CONTINUED DETENTION OF TRADE UNION LEADERS WITHOUT FORMAL CHARGES OR TRIAL, THE SUSPENSION OF UNION ACTIVITIES AND COLLECTIVE BARGAINING, THE INTERVENTION OF THE UNIONS AND TO CERTAIN ASPECTS OF THE NEW GROUND RULES EXPECTED TO BE INCORPORATED IN A MODIFIED TRADE UNION LAW (LEY DE ASOCIACIONES PROFESIONALES) WHICH HE CONSIDERED NEGATIVE. HE DESCRIBED THE LABOR MOVEMENT'S OBJECTIVE OF CONVOKING A GENERAL PLENARY OF TRADE UNION LEADERS AS A MATTER OF NECESSITY (AND NOT ONE WHICH CAN BE LEFT TO THE DISCRETION OF THE GOVERNMENT AUTHORITIES).

4. REFERRING TO THE ELECTORAL VICTORY OF GOVERNOR CARTER IN THE US, CARRANZA SAW IT AS A DEMONSTRATION OF "HOW A LABOR MOVEMENT CAN PARTICIPATE WITH TOTAL CLARITY AND IN A DEMOCRATIC MANNER IN THE (POLITICAL) PROCESS OF A NATION. PERHAPS IT'S AN EXAMPLE WE SHOULD TAKE INTO ACCOUNT," HE SAID.

5. PRESS ACCOUNTS TOOK AMPLE NOTE OF THE FACT THAT CARRANZA IS A MEMBER OF THE ICFTU EXECUTIVE BOARD, DESCRIBING THE LATTER AS AN IMPORTANT OBSERVER OF ARGENTINE LABOR POLICIES WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF THE ILO, WHOSE GOVERNING BODY IS MEETING THIS MONTH IN GENEVA. CARRANZA'S STATEMENT ELICITED WARM PRAISE FROM SUCH ARGENTINE TRADE UNION LEADERS AS JUAN JOSE TACCONE, THE EMBATTLED LEADER OF THE LIGHT AND POWER UNION OF BUENOS AIRES WHICH HAS BEEN INVOLVED IN A SERIOUS LABOR DISPUTE WITH THE BUENOS AIRES ELECTRIC UTILITIES. TACCONE THOUGHT THAT THE SHOW OF APPARENT UNITY DEMONSTRATED AT THE RECENT COMMERCE WORKERS CONGRESS BY RIVAL LEADERS SUCH AS CARRANZA AND DAVID DISKIN WAS A POSITIVE EXAMPLE FOR THE REST OF THE ARGENTINE LABOR MOVEMENT. TACCONE SAW CARRANZA'S STATEMENT TO THE PRESS AS ENHANCING NOT ONLY LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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CARRANZA'S STATURE WITHIN THE ARGENTINE UNION MOVEMENT, BUT ALSO THAT OF THE DEMOCRATIC INTERNATIONAL LABOR MOVEMENT AS WELL. CARRANZA IS ALSO A MEMBER OF THE SO-CALLED "COMMITTEE OF FIVE", AN AD-HOC COORDINATING GROUP OF LABOR LEADERS CHARGED WITH THE TASK OF ORGANIZING A PLENARY OF ALL THE TRADE UNION LEADERS IN ARGENTINA WITH THE OBJECTIVE OF ELECTING A PROVISIONAL BOARD TO LEAD THE MOVEMENT OUT OF ITS CURRENT STATE OF MALAISE AND DISORGANIZATION.

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NOTE BY OC/T: NOT PASSED ABOVE ADDRESSEE.

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